



PRESS RELEASE

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LEGISLATURE OVERRIDES COUNTY EXEC VETO NO MORE TURNING A BLIND EYE TO PREDATORS

Lindsay Bill Eliminates Voucher System for Homeless Sex Offenders

JUNE 8, 2010 –Suffolk County Legislature Presiding Officer William J. Lindsay (D-Holbrook) earned the approval of the County Legislature Tuesday evening to override County Executive Steve Levy’s veto of his legislation ending the voucher system for housing homeless sex offenders and calling on the County Department of Social Services to implement a plan developed by Lindsay to settle the issue once and for all.

“There is no good answer to the problem of housing homeless sex offenders but this law is the best solution we have seen so far,” said Legislator Lindsay. “This plan will provide 24/7 monitoring of these potentially dangerous predators and end the disaster waiting to happen that is the voucher system, which provides absolutely no monitoring. We will no longer turn a blind eye to allowing unmonitored sex offenders in our neighborhoods. Vouchers undermined the central goal of Megan’s Law--to allow residents to be aware of the presence of sex offenders in their community. It also makes it possible for sex offenders to be housed in motel settings in close proximity, within a few feet, of families with children.”

Under the voucher system, the Department of Social Services gave a homeless sex offender a daily voucher of \$90 and the sex offender was responsible for finding their own housing.

State law mandates that Suffolk County, through its Department of Social Services, provides housing for all homeless individuals, including sex offenders. For the past several years and with much controversy, the Department has housed most homeless sex offenders in trailers in Riverhead and Westhampton. Residents of the towns of Riverhead and Southampton have complained that it is inequitable to house all homeless sex offenders in their communities. The County has also incurred large costs transporting sex offenders to and from these trailers, and the condition of the trailers has is the subject of ongoing litigation.

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Lindsay's law directs the Commissioner of Social Services to end the controversial homeless sex offender housing voucher program and gives the department 30 days to come up with a replacement plan.

Lindsay's plan requires that no more than six shelters be established, shelters to be run by experienced group home providers. No more than one such shelter shall be included in any township or legislative district. The shelters would be monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Shelters must be located in non-residential neighborhoods.

"It is just lunacy to give these people \$90 a night to go wherever they want," Lindsay continued. "We will now have residences for these homeless sex offenders in the safest locations we can find, away from residential neighborhoods, and monitored 24/7. That is the best plan to provide the housing that is required by state law while protecting the safety of our families and communities."